

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ABU DH 00151 191125Z
ACTION NEA-10

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R 191015Z JAN 78
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INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 0151

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, TC
SUBJ: HIGHJACKING AND TERRORISM

REF: 77 STATE 290399 AND STATE 000761

1. SINCE RECEIVING FIRST REFTEL, WE HAVE SPOKEN TO SEVERAL UAE MFA OFFICIALS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF UAE CONSIDERING ADHERENCE TO ONE OR MORE OF THREE ANTI-HIJACKING CONVENTIONS. OUR PITCH HAS BEEN BASED ON RECENT STATEMENTS BY UAE PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID ON NEED FOR MORE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO PREVENT ACTS OF TERRORISM AFTER OCTOBER 1977 HIJACKING OF LUFTHANSA AIRLINER TO DUBAI AND ASSASSINATION OF MINSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SAIF GHUBBASH (SEE ABU DHABI A-79).

2. I MOST RECENTLY RAISED QUESTION WHEN I MET WITH UAE FOREIGN MINISTER AHMAD SUWAIDI ON JANUARY 17. HIS RESPONSE WAS THAT WHILE UAE RECOGNIZED PROBLEM, IT COULD NOT TAKE INITIATIVE TO ADHERE TO THESE CONVENTIONS ON ITS OWN. UAE WAS MODERATE COUNTRY CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER MODERATES IN REGION -- SAUDI
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PAGE 02 ABU DH 00151 191125Z

ARABIA, BAHRAIN, KUWAIT, QATAR --- AND LIKE THEM CONDEMNED ACTS OF TERRORISM. MUCH, THOUGH NOT ALL INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM WHICH NOW EXISTS WAS RELATED TO UNRESOLVED PALESTINIAN ISSUE. BUT NO MATTER WHAT ARAB COUNTRIES MIGHT DO AGAINST HIJACKING, ACTS OF TERRORISM IN MIDDLE EAST WOULD CONTINUE AS LONG AS BASOC ARAB-ISRAEL DISPUTE REMAINS UNRESOLVED AND THERE IS NOT SOME ACCEPTQNCCE OF PALES-
TINIANS RIGHT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN NATIONAL IDENTITY.

3. I TOLD SUWAIDI THAT I THOUGH TERRORISM WAS NO LONGER ASSOCIATED WITH JUST THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE. AS WE HAD SEEN IN LATEST DUBAI INCIDENT, THOSE WHO WERE ASSOCIATED WITH THAT HIJACKING HAD ASSOCIATED THEMSELVES WITH GROUP OF TERRORISTS WHO WERE ACTING AGAINST WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT AND HAD NOTHING REALLY TO DO WITH QUESTION OF PALESTINE. I INDICATED THAT I BELIEVED WE WERE MAKING SIMILAR APPROACHES TO ALL OF THE OTHER ARAB MODERATE STATES WHICH HE HAD NAMED AND THAT MODERATES IN ARAB WORLD HAD STRONG INTEREST IN WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT ACTS OF TERRORISM FOR THEIR OWN SECURITY AND STABILITY.

4. SUWAIDI TOOK NOTES OF MAY DEMARH SAYING THAT HE WOULD CONSULT WITH OTHER "BROTHERLY COUNTRIES" IN THE REGION. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, GIVE ME MUCH ENCOURAGEMENT THAT UAE WOULD MOVE QUICKLY ON ANY ANTI-HIJACKING CONVENTIONS UNLESS OTHER MODERATE ARAB COUNTRIES INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO DO SO. I INTEND TO PURSUE SUBJECT WHEN I NEXT SEE SUWAIDI.

5. MEANWHILE2 MINISTRY FOREIGN AFFAIRS UN DIRECTOR ISA FARRAJ, IN RESPONSE TO EARLIER DEMARCHE ON AERIAL PIRACY BY DCM, INDICATED THAT IN ADDITION TO POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS CITED BY SUWAIDI, UAEG WAS FEARFUL THAT ANY STEPS IT MIGHT TAKE TO SEIZE OR PUNISH HIJACKERS, ESPECIALLY PALESTINIANS, MIGHT EXPOSE UAE TO TERRORIST RETALIATION. HENCE, POLICY WAS NOT TO COOPERATE WITH HIJACKERS BUT TO PREVENT THEM FROM LANDING OR, IF THAT NOT POSSIBLE, TO EXPEDITE THEIR
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PAGE 03 ABU DH 00151 191125Z

EARLY DEPARTURE TO ANOTHER JURISDICTION.

6. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE UAE AUTHORITIES ARE GENUINELY SINCERE IN THEIR DESIRES TO STRENGTHEN SECURITY AT LOCAL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS AND MIGHT WELCOME CONCRETE OFFERS OF US TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN FORM OF TRAINING, SECURITY SURVEYS, ETC. BUT WHETHER UAE PROCEEDS TO ADHERE TO INTERNATIONAL HIJACKING CONVENTIONS WILL BE DETERMINED PRIMARILY BY ATTITUDE OF SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN GULF. PROBABLY WORST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN AT THIS POINT WOULD BE FOR CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS TO GENERATE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED CRITICISM OF LACK OF ADHERENCE BY VARIOUS ARAB STATES TO ANTI-HIJACKING CONVENTIONS AND THREATS OF POSSIBLE US RETALIATION AGAINST COUNTRIES WHICH DO NOT ADHERE. WE BELIEVE THAT AS LONG AS MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE REMAINS UNRESOLVED, USG EFFORTS TO BUILD INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST HIJACKING WILL BE SEEN IN POLITICAL TERMS, IN ARAB WORLD UNLESS SUBJECT IS CAREFULLY HANDLED THROUGH QUIET DIPLOMATIC APPROACHES.
DICKMAN

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